

## **Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights was Senate-confirmed and sworn in by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack swore in Dr. Joe Leonard, Jr., as Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights on April 6, 2009. Nominated by President Barack Obama, Assistant Secretary Leonard received unanimous support for his confirmation by the U.S. Senate on April 2, 2009. Assistant Secretary Leonard is a native of Austin, TX. He holds a Ph.D. in American history with a specialization in civil rights history from Howard University, Washington, DC; an M.A. degree from Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA; and a B.A. degree from Huston-Tillotson University in Austin.

Before joining USDA, Assistant Secretary Leonard served as Senior Advisor to Representative Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick (D-MI), and Executive Director of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). While at the CBC, Leonard managed the daily activities of the Caucus and helped guide the legislative policy for its 43 congressional members.

Prior to his role at the CBC, Leonard served as the Executive Director of the Black Leadership Forum, an umbrella organization of 32 member groups that together work to develop and implement progressive public policies for social change. Leonard has also served as the Washington, DC Bureau Chief of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and Director of the Arthur Fleming Institute of the Center for Policy Alternatives.